

IMAGINEBLOOMINGTON STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY, AUGUST 28, 2013

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Attendance:

Steering Committee Members: Jack Baker, Doug Bruce, John Carter, Dave Harstad, Mike Litwin, Patrick Murray, Chris Smith, Steve Smith, Jan Sorby, Tom Swafford, Larry Wilson and Carl Zager.

Others in attendance: Jacqui Bauer (staff), Jason Carnes (staff), Danise Alano-Martin (staff), Miah Michaelson (staff), Tom Micuda (staff), Nate Nickel (staff), Scott Robinson (staff).

Goal Setting for Group 3 Topics: Transportation, Economic & Sustainable Development and Government Services

Mr. Robinson opened by welcoming everyone and gave a brief overview of the anticipated meeting structure. He then invited Ms. Sorby to continue discussing the topic of tourism that began at the last meeting. Ms. Sorby provided a number of examples concerning the economic development benefits of tourism, especially as related to historic preservation and heritage tourism. She also pointed to the supporting data and research provided by the National Park Service. Mr. Harstad agreed with Ms. Sorby's assessment.

Mr. Murray said that Form Based Code could be a way to keep historic structures well suited to modern uses. He felt that the Prospect Hill neighborhood is a good example of where this concept could work well. Mr. Chris Smith also talked about the benefits of Form Based Code, as well as the importance of the Complete Streets concept. He felt this is especially relevant with I-69 construction, and that the timing of any local efforts associated with the highway needs to happen soon. Ms. Sorby said that Form Based Code could bring predictability to the development process and help safeguard the character of Bloomington, which is an important asset.

Mr. Robinson then invited Mr. Nickel to give an overview of the City Facilities Report. Mr. Nickel discussed the background of the Report, outlined the scope of the document and provided several specific examples of future City facility and service needs. Mr. Robinson then asked Mr. Swafford to give a perspective from the Utilities Service Board. Mr. Swafford discussed water quality, current efforts to improve service and efficiency, infrastructure needs and challenges and state utility reporting requirements.

Mr. Robinson asked for thoughts or comments regarding the Government Services topic. Mr. Baker said that improvements should be made to Seminary Park in order to make it more of a destination and improve the surrounding area. He suggested adding amenities and programming to make the park more inviting. Mr. Chris Smith said that the Parks & Recreation Department has many great plans that are highlighted by the City Facilities Report. He asked about national standards for parks facilities and whether or not the community could financially support the proposed new facilities. Mr. Robinson answered that at this point, it's important to identify goals and worry about funding details later in the process. Ms. Sorby said that as our community gets denser, we will need more passive greenspace.

Mr. Micuda mentioned that Bloomington has very high amounts of greenspace compared to other communities, largely due to the acreage of Griffy Lake. He also talked about TIF and bond options that have either been, or can potentially be, used for financing park facilities. Ms. Alano-Martin talked briefly about a public-private park space opportunity in the Certified Technology Park.

Mr. Chris Smith asked about the Convention Center and whether it should be viewed as a Government Service. Mr. Micuda talked about the tourism draw of the Convention Center and the public-private governing model it operates under. He said that the comprehensive plan could address expansion options. Ms. Alano-Martin said that the convention center could potentially be owned by a non-government entity in the future. Mr. Murray talked about the current high demand for the facility, as well as the amenities that the Convention Center provides to the community. He also noted that school facilities could serve as community park facilities. Mr. Carter said that school facilities are available to the public, but there are both scheduling demands and costs associated with operating the facilities.

Mr. Chris Smith asked about annexation plans and whether City planning and zoning in AIFA areas was still wanted. Mr. Micuda briefly outlined current annexation studies. Mr. Chris Smith also asked about solid waste and recycling. He wondered if the community was committed to recycling and composting, as well as the costs associated with those efforts. Ms. Bauer outlined current trash and recycling programs. She also discussed the specific challenges and future opportunities associated with them, especially in regards to the current practice of shipping trash and recyclables to Terre Haute.

Mr. Wilson said that recycling is a key component of Bloomington's identity. Mr. Harstad said that the community needs strategies in place for trash and recycling, even if it's a 50 year plan. Mr. Baker recommended using efficiency in waste and recycling, plus thinking in broad principles to address sustainability in the future. Mr. Bruce agreed with Jack and pointed out success stories from groups in Indianapolis. He asked what we need to do locally to get those types of efforts going in Bloomington. Mr. Chris Smith asked if a new landfill in Monroe County could be an option. Mr. Wilson talked about the difficulties communities face in creating a new landfill. He also talked about the economic development benefits that recycling can offer, as well as the societal and environmental benefits. Discussion ensued about recycling and reuse programs underway both locally and in Indianapolis.

Mr. Robinson asked if we should aim to maintain the status quo of current City services, or potentially look at alternative ways to deliver these services. He gave an example of requiring fire sprinklers in new buildings versus adding more fire department resources. Mr. Bruce said that changing the Building Code could offer opportunities in this area. Mr. Carter asked about any possible alternatives to providing 24 hour services. Mr. Murray pointed out a recent story from Fishers, Indiana where sprinklers could have been extremely beneficial in preventing a serious fire incident.

Mr. Robinson closed the meeting by saying that staff is wrapping up the draft goals for the Group 3 topics. These will be shared with the Steering Committee soon and will be available prior to the next public workshop. He invited all Steering Committee members to attend the next public workshop, which will be held on September 12th at the Monroe County Library. That workshop will provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the Group 3 draft goals. Mr. Robinson also outlined the anticipated next steps in planning process. Staff will spend time reviewing the public feedback for the draft goals and identifying potential edits. Both the Steering Committee and the public will have additional opportunities to review and comment regarding these edits.